

**Soldiers** **Online**



More than 60,000 students from Latin American nations graduated from the U.S. Army School of the Americas.

**Fort Benning, Ga.**

## School of Americas Furls Flag

The U.S. Army School of the Americas closed Dec. 15, ending a history of cooperation with Latin American neighbors.

"This school brought our nations closer together in a common quest for peace and prosperity in our own hemisphere," said outgoing Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera, guest speaker for the closing ceremony.

The Department of Defense Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, or WHISC, opened at Fort Benning Jan. 17.

Caldera said that, thanks to U.S. engagement policies, all can rejoice in how far Latin America has come.

"Every country in Latin

America — save Cuba — is now governed by elected leaders accountable to their people," he said.

He acknowledged that although South America still has a host of problems — including border disputes, narco-trafficking and environmental degradation — democracy, free markets and human rights are a key part of the political landscape. He emphasized that those problems can be resolved peacefully through combined efforts.

The secretary honored the more than 60,000 graduates of the school, and thanked the school's soldiers and faculty, both past and present, who upheld the American values and served as a force for good.

He also sent a message to those who criticized the United States' role in Latin America during the last half-century and who wrongly accused the school

of teaching torture and training dictators.

"Let me say very clearly that any soldier in Latin America, who had even the most remote connection to the School of the Americas, who has ever committed a human rights violation, did so in spite of the training they received at the School of the Americas and not because of it," Caldera said.

He said the critic's quarrel was not really with the school or the Army. It was with the U.S. government's role in Latin America and the fact that the United States supported its allies in their struggle for security.

"Today peace, democrati-

zation and a redefinition of civil-military relationships are on the march in the Americas after decades of bitter conflict," said Col. Glenn Weidner, USARSA's commandant. "Each of these accomplishments lay at the heart of the mission of the School of the Americas since its inception." — *Army News Service*

**Washington, D.C.**

## Military, Civilians Get Gridlock Help

MILITARY members and DOD civilians within the United States and its territories are now eli-

## Transformation News

### Army Starts PERSTEMPO Clock

AN Army clock began ticking Oct. 1. Its purpose is to monitor the time an individual spends deployed and signal when a soldier may be due for extra pay.

The fiscal year 2000 National Defense Authorization Act required all services to start tracking individual deployments with the start of FY 2001. The legislation, signed into law by President Bill Clinton Oct. 30, clarified the deployment definition and the management-approval authorities, and authorized payment of \$100 per diem to each service member deployed more than 401 days within a rolling 730-day window.

"The intent of the personnel tempo policy is to force commanders to better manage soldiers' time away from home," said CPT Danita Dempsey, personnel tempo staff officer in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel.

The deployment tracking and per diem pay requirements apply to both the active and reserve components.

The PERSTEMPO program is being implemented in three phases.

The first phase, developing and fielding a web-based tracking system and training soldiers how to input data, is already in place. The second phase is fielding final guidance on managing "high deployment-days soldiers" to meet the act's intent. The management guidance was to be fielded before January. The final stage, fielding final guidance on payment procedures, is expected to be released before April.

Soldiers' PERSTEMPO counts were scheduled to appear on their leave and earnings statements beginning in January. — *ARNEWS*

gible for mass-transit subsidy benefits.

Deputy Defense Secretary Rudy de Leon has directed that DOD installations and activities establish mass transit incentive programs for DOD personnel in the 50 states and Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands.

Use of commuter mass-transit subsidies helps to "reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, reduce wear and tear on the roadways, and relieve commuters' stress," said Diane Disney, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for civilian personnel policy.

President Bill Clinton last year directed all federal agencies to establish transportation fringe-benefit programs to reduce federal employees' contribution to traffic congestion and air pollution, and to expand commuting alternatives.

DOD established a mass transit benefit program in the National Capital Region for employees who use such conveyances as buses, trains and van pools.

"Under the executive order, there were differences between what was to be provided inside the National Capital Region, and what was to be provided outside of it," Disney said.

Inside the region, she said, the executive order prescribed a subsidy of up to \$65 a month, indexed for the future. Outside the NCR, she added, there was not a direct subsidy, but a tax-sheltering benefit, with which people would be able to pay for their transportation costs with pretax dollars.

All DOD agencies may now offer their employees the direct subsidy in amounts that do not exceed personal commuting costs, up to the maximum allowed by the Internal Revenue Code (currently \$65 a month; \$100 a month and indexed beginning January 2002). Parking costs are not included in the program.

The costs of DOD's mass-transit incentive program are borne by the agencies involved, and vary according to the number of participants, Disney said.

Nonappropriated fund government employees and reserve-component members on active duty are also eligible to participate. — *American Forces Press Service*

America's Army is recognized around the world as a land force without peer and a team of goodwill ambassadors who represent the best the greatest nation on earth has to offer. There is no better testament to your abilities.

I also know that you could not achieve all that you do without the steadfast love and support of your families. Our nation is indebted to them for the sacrifices they make that allow you to do this noble and important work of keeping America strong, safe and secure. My special thanks to them for their service to our country.

The future of our Army in the 21st century is bright be-

## Sports News

### Reservists Can Compete in Pentathlon

THE chief of the Army Reserve is offering reserve officers from all branches of the armed forces a chance to compete in the NATO Military Pentathlon.

The next three-week course at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, runs from June 17 to July 8. Up to 50 reserve officers who apply by April 15 will be invited to attend by a joint-service selection committee.

The program is designed to teach reserve officers relevant combat skills at the advanced level to serve in turn as resident expert instructors in their units.

The training camp features orienteering and land navigation; rifle and pistol marksmanship; and a land and water obstacle course. The officers will also receive classes on policies and events in NATO, peak performance processes, fitness and nutrition topics, law of war, first aid and leadership.

At the completion of the training camp the top 28 performers will be extended an additional three weeks to prepare for the three-day NATO competition to be held in July in Spain.

The standards required to submit an application are:

- Men — complete a five-mile run in 32 minutes, an 800-meter run in two and half minutes and a 50-meter swim in 35 seconds.
- Women — complete a five-mile run in 37 and a half minutes, an 800-meter run in three minutes and a 50-meter swim in 40 seconds.

More information is available on the Web at [www.militarypentathlon.com](http://www.militarypentathlon.com). — *Army Reserve Command*

## Washington

### Secretary Caldera's Farewell

TO the Soldiers, Civilians and Families of the United States Army:

As I end my tenure as secretary of the Army, I want to tell you how enormously proud I am of the honorable and dedicated manner in which you serve our country every day. As I look back on my two-and-a-half years as secretary, what I will remember most is your selflessness and professionalism. Whatever our nation asked of you, you have always delivered more. Because of what you do, often under the most difficult of circumstances,

cause of you. The values, leadership, judgment and talent you bring are the cornerstone of all we are and ever will be. You are the enablers who will achieve the Army's transformation to a lighter, more lethal and more mobile force.

My wife, Eva, and I will miss being a daily part of America's Army, but we wish each of you continued success, and our thoughts and prayers will be with you and your families wherever you serve. God bless you, God bless our great Army family, and God bless America. — *Louis Caldera*



Louis Caldera

## Washington

### Shinseki Approves Beret Flash

ENDING the discussion whether soldiers will wear distinctive unit flashes on the black berets to be issued in June, Chief of Staff of the Army GEN Eric K. Shinseki recently decided on a universal flash.

All soldiers will initially wear the universal flash, except for those in units that already have berets, such as ranger, airborne and special forces. These troops will continue to wear their current beret flashes.

The new flash, worn on the left front of the beret, is a semi-circular shield 1-7/8 inches wide and 2-1/4 inches high. It has a "bluebird" background with 13 white stars superimposed just inside its outer border. Officers will wear their rank in the center of the shield.

"The flash is designed to closely replicate the colors of the flag of the commander in chief of the Continental Army at the time of its victory at Yorktown," said Pam Reece, an industrial specialist with the Army's Institute of Heraldry. Reece and other institute staff members created four beret flash designs from which Shinseki made his selection.

The universal flash will eventually be replaced by unit-specific flashes.

Shinseki announced Oct. 17 that soldiers will begin wearing the black beret on the next Army birthday, June 14. He said the beret will symbolize the Army's transformation to a lighter, more deployable force.

"It is time for the entire Army to accept the challenge of excellence that has so long been a hallmark of our special operations and airborne units," Shinseki said. Adopting the be-

ret will be "another step toward achieving the capabilities of the objective force" of Army transformation, he said.

While Army rangers have worn the black beret since the mid-1970s, they have not had a monopoly on the stylish cap. Prior to the rangers adopting the black beret, it was worn by armor troops at Fort Knox, Ky., and others in armored-cavalry units. — ARNEWS

## Washington

### Army Emphasizes Junior Officer Retention

ARMY officials have announced new initiatives intended to reduce the loss of lieutenants and captains.

The initiatives include the activation of a central website for officer issues, electronic polling of the junior officer corps,

## Financial News

### Soldiers to Join Thrift Savings Plan

MILITARY members will be able to create their own retirement nest eggs by using the Federal Employees Thrift Savings Plan beginning next year, DOD officials said.

A portion of the fiscal year 2001 National Defense Authorization Act, signed on Oct. 30, allows service members to participate in the civilian retirement plan, said Navy Capt. Elliott Bloxom, DOD's director of military compensation.

The TSP offers federal civilian employees the same type of savings and tax benefits that many private corporations offer their employees under so-called "401(k)" plans. Money invested in the TSP comes from pretax dollars and reduces taxable income; investments and earnings are not taxed until they're withdrawn.

Active-duty and Ready Reserve service members will have the opportunity to invest up to 5 percent of their basic pay in the plan and all of any special and incentive pays they may receive — including bonuses — up to a total \$10,500 annual limit.

"Right now, we envision that members will be able to enroll in the TSP beginning in October 2001," Bloxom said. "That will mark the start of a special 60-day open season." He estimated service members would actually begin investing by January 2002.

TSP participation is optional and not automatic. Service members who want to sign up or change their investment levels generally would do so during designated "open seasons" — the same as civilian employees.

The TSP currently allows employees to invest in any or all of three mutual funds: a government bond fund, a corporate bond fund and a stock fund.

For more information on how the program works for civilian employees, visit the TSP website at [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov). Information pertaining to military members' participation in the TSP should soon also be available at the website. — AFPS

Wayne V. Hall



Pam Reece, an Institute of Heraldry industrial specialist in textiles, displays the final design of the new beret flash.



tracking individual personnel tempo on each officer's record, changes in policies affecting separation, short tour guarantees and the expansion of assignment options.

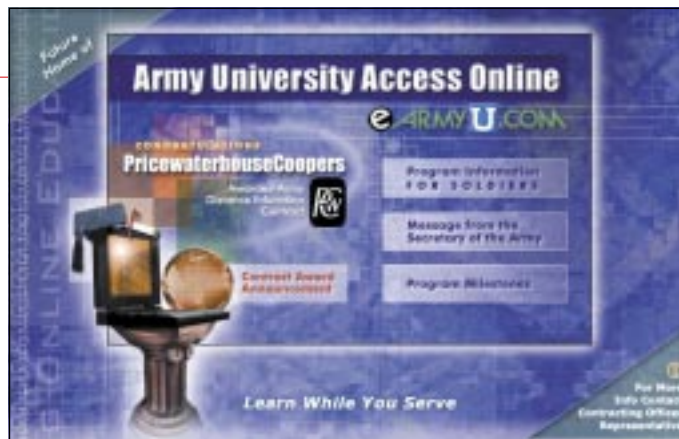
During the fiscal year that just ended the loss rate of captains increased 2 percent. This was partially offset by a decrease in the loss rate for lieutenants by more than 2 percent, but the overall loss rate for company grade officers in fiscal year 2000 was about 1 percent higher than optimal, officials said.

The new initiatives are the result of work by several task forces established over the past year to assess factors causing junior officers to leave the Army at higher-than-expected rates. The task forces identified job satisfaction, personal and family time, overall well-being,

spouse satisfaction and pay as important considerations for junior officers making decisions to stay on active duty or leave the Army.

A recent directive provides greater opportunities for captains to get the assignments they want following completion of the advanced military schooling known as the Career Course, which officers attend in their fourth year of service. Another recent directive helps junior officers to obtain master's degrees while at the Career Course and provides more flexibility in continuing-education options.

Several institutional factors have contributed to a shortfall of company-grade officers, officials said. During the drawdown period the Army brought fewer lieutenants onto active duty. Any losses within a smaller group



**The Army contract with PricewaterhouseCoopers will provide distance-education for 80,000 soldiers over the next five years.**

have had a more pronounced impact, officials said. As the Army commissioned fewer officers, there was also an increase in the number of captains authorized in units.

The Army last year lowered the promotion time to captain by six months to further balance the requirements.

"The senior Army leadership is very much aware of this situation," said Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel LTG Timothy J. Maude. "The initiatives announced today and others taken in recent months are designed to encourage more junior officers to stay in uniform." — ARNEWS

#### Washington

### Distance Education Contract Awarded

THE Army has awarded a \$453 million contract to PricewaterhouseCoopers to provide distance education for an estimated 80,000 soldiers over the next five years.

The initiative will be implemented over the next year with interested soldiers at Fort Benning, Ga.; Fort Campbell, Ky.; and Fort Hood, Texas. Program registration at these installations was scheduled to start in mid-January.

The initiative will help eligible soldiers obtain college degrees or professional technical certifications while they serve in the Army by providing

such tools as notebook computers and various online courses.

Soldiers signing up for the program will receive a free technology package consisting of a laptop computer, printer, Internet service provider and access to a technology service help desk. The laptop and printer become the soldier's personal property once 12 credit hours have been completed within a two-year window. Course tuition and books are free.

However, there are limitations to registering and keeping the equipment, said Susan Johnson, the program's manager in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. Army education counselors will have information on the program.

The consortium created by PricewaterhouseCoopers features an initial set of 25 accredited higher-education institutions. These schools include members of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges — Army Degrees program as well as historically black colleges and tribal colleges. The new contractor has also enlisted the support of such high-tech companies as TurboTek Computers, Fiberlink, Precision Response Corporation, Saba, PeopleSoft and Blackboard. More academic institutions and technology companies are expected to join PricewaterhouseCoopers as the program expands. — ARNEWS

## Healthcare News

### TRICARE Benefits Added for Active Duty

ACTIVE duty members and their families should look for major new benefits coming soon in DOD's TRICARE managed-healthcare plan, a senior program official said.

Air Force Col. Frank Cumberland, TRICARE Management Activity director of communications and customer service, said the most publicized TRICARE change in the defense budget, signed Oct. 30, is the opening up of benefits to Medicare-eligible retirees age 65 and older. The coming wave of change, however, won't overlook active-duty members and families.

Some of the benefits being added to TRICARE within the next year include:

- After April 30, active-duty family members will no longer have to make copayments for care from civilian providers.
- In October, family members of active-duty troops in remote locations become eligible for the TRICARE Prime Remote program.
- Within the next five years, DOD will make chiropractic care available to active-duty troops.

TRICARE and health-affairs officials will announce the details of the changes when plans are complete, Cumberland said.

For more information, visit the TRICARE Web site at [www.tricare.osd.mil](http://www.tricare.osd.mil). — AFPS



## Washington

### Help for Pet Quarantine Costs

SERVICE members and DOD civilians are getting help from Uncle Sam when they have to quarantine pets during permanent-change-of-station moves.

The government now provides up to \$275 to help defray the quarantining costs.

The payment is limited to costs associated with quarantining cats and dogs. Cats and dogs transported from the United States to Iceland, Great Britain, Guam and Hawaii are routinely quarantined from 30 days to six months after arrival. — AFPS

## Washington

### Army Offers Free Online Tech Courses

SOLDIERS and DA civilians can continue to take free online information technology courses, thanks to a recently renewed contract between the Army and SmartForce, a commercial computer-based training company.

Since the Army first started offering the service in 1998, its

catalog has grown to offer training on more than 1,100 technical subjects.

"In an increasingly technology-based Army, these courses not only make students smarter at their jobs but give them more marketable skills for future jobs — inside or out of the military," said LTC Tom Loper, the program's project manager.

You can find program information on the web at [www.armycbt.army.mil](http://www.armycbt.army.mil). Courses range from how to use word-processor, database and spreadsheet programs for beginner through advanced users, to 70 certification-preparation courses for systems administrators and computer programmers.

While all the courses are free for registered users, the program does not offer actual certifications. Arrangements for certification testing and associated testing fees — often costing several hundred dollars — must be made through commercial vendors. Links to those vendors are posted on the Army CBT Web page.

Many of the offered courses may qualify for college credit. Loper recommended that those interested in getting college

credit for SmartForce classes check with their local Army Education Services offices to determine which qualify and what costs may be involved.

Currently, the instruction is primarily text-based with some graphics and photos. SmartForce plans to offer streaming video for instructor lectures when available bandwidth is large enough, Loper said. Online mentoring service is also offered on a limited basis.

More than 70,000 registered Army users have used the SmartForce instruction.

Registration must be made on a computer tied into an Army wide-area network using a military domain address. However, once the registration is complete, students may log on with a student number and password at home, a local library or on any other computer connected to the Internet. — ARNEWS

## Financial News

### Back Pay for RC Captains

MORE than 1,500 reserve-component captains may be eligible for nine months to a year of back pay with adjustment of their dates of rank.

This opportunity comes under the second phase of a program to review records of about 6,000 Army Reserve and Army National Guard officers. The first phase affected captains selected by promotion boards that convened from November 1997 through March 1998. Phase II is for captains promoted by boards that met from November 1998 through February 1999.

Officers affected in Phase II should submit applications and documentation to have their records reviewed for possible adjustment of their dates of rank.

The review stems from an oversight that occurred when revised promotion policies were enacted as a result of the Reserve Officer Personnel Management Act, said Maj. Tom Fowler, a personnel policy integrator in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel.

"When it implemented ROPMA in October 1996, the Army did not grandfather second lieutenant time-in-grade in excess of two years," Fowler said.

As a result, some officers were required to serve eight years as lieutenants, Fowler said, instead of just seven.

The Office of Promotions (Reserve Components) mailed information packets containing all required application forms and instructions. Eligible officers should have already received the packets.

Officers who believe they are eligible under Phase II but have not received their packets should contact the Office of Promotions (Reserve Components), ATTN: TAPC-MSL-N (DOR), 9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri, 63132-5200.

Phase III, which will consider officers whose first-time consideration was delayed to the November 1999 through February 2000 boards, is scheduled for early this year. — ARNEWS